

PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW

OCTOBER 1931

In Memoriam

J. S. MacDonald
"Harry MacDonough"

Program Transcriptions

Detailed announcements of the
new long-playing records

Ecstasy Without Grimace

Strawinski's "Symphonie de Psaumes"

News and Reviews of
New Records



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EDITORIAL

NEGOTIATING the somewhat turbulent water of the past few months we had almost forgotten that THE PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW was completing the fifth year of its cruise on the journalistic sea. The issue of October 1926, with its review of the first important electrical recordings (Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*, Dvorak's "New World" Symphony, and the Toscanini disc of *Midsummer Night's Dream* excerpts), marked our launching. With the present issue we inaugurate our sixth year, making the first definite announcement of an achievement as vital to the progress of phonography as electrical recording—long-playing records.

To the engineers who have finally developed the long-playing records and instruments to the marketable stage The P. M. R.—and every phonophile—offers the most heartfelt congratulations. The severest handicap to recorded music has been conquered; its evolution and perfection should develop now with startling rapidity.

Five years ago THE PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW was the lone and feeble voice of a handful of enthusiasts, cranks perhaps, who believed in a musical medium whose possibilities were still almost in the visionary stage. The past years have justified that belief and the ranks of serious phonophiles have been enormously expanded. We shall endeavor to play as energetic and constructive part in the developments to come and convincingly press home the now undeniable claims of phonography as a musical and entertainment medium of the most significant order.

J. S. MacDonald ("Harry MacDonough")

The passing of a phonographic veteran

THE sudden death of J. S. MacDonald removes from the phonographic stage one of most important contributors to the evolution of recorded music. Record buying amateurs of today, to whom Mr. MacDonald's name may be entirely unfamiliar, can have little idea of the moving part this modest figure has played, first under a stage name, and in latter years entirely behind the public scenes. On the very eve of going to press it has been impossible for us to secure full biographical details from Mr. MacDonald's former associates. We plan to publish these next month, but meanwhile the announcement of his death should not be unaccompanied by some tribute to his long and distinguished phonographic career. To that indefatigable historian, Mr. Ulysses J. Walsh, we are indebted for much of the material that follows.

Four years before Mr. MacDonald began recording, he appeared—"under his stage name, Harry MacDonough—as Prince Paul in the supporting cast of Lillian Russell in Offenbach's *The Grand Duchess* at the Casino, New York, 1891. Mr. MacDonough, to quote Walsh, "was a lyric tenor whom I consider the superior of McCormack, and whose enunciation was invariably a model for other singers." The Haydn (later Hayden!) Quartet was formed with Mr. MacDonough as first tenor, John Bieling, second, S. H. Dudley, baritone, and William F. Hooley, bass. From 1895 to 1914, when it disbanded, this group was the unsurpassed vocal ensemble of its kind, making hundreds of records many of which were among the best sellers of all times. One of them, Victor 16394 (originally 97), *Lead Kindly Light*, was named by Mr. Walsh as "the oldest record seeing active service today . . . still a bustling breadwinner for its makers." Some other famous ones were Jimmie Walkers' *Will You Love Me in December as You Do in May?*, *In Dear Old Georgia*, *Dreaming on the Ohio*, *Sweet Adeline*, and many others. Mr. MacDonough alone made scores of other records, many of which were exceedingly popular. Beyond a doubt, during his recording career he participated in the making of more discs than any other artist.

The career of the usual artist ends with the end of his active singing days, but with the retirement of Harry MacDonough, Mr. MacDonald's career under his own name was scarcely begun. The technical end of record making began to take more and more of his attention and he was soon placed in charge of the New York studios of the Victor Company, later going to Camden as chief assistant to the then recording manager, Mr. Child. About 1919 he enlarged his activities still further and became sales manager for the Victor Company, returning later to the recording studios where he participated in the making of millions of discs in the so-called golden age of the phonograph.

In 1925 he left Victor to become Recording Manager of the Columbia Phonograph Company, in which position he was still active until his death. Under his direction came not only the remarkable recording feats of the acoustical days, but later the brilliant developments of electrical recording, most notable of which perhaps was the first adequate reproduction of piano tone with the memorable Chopin and Brahms sonatas played by Percy Grainger for Columbia.

No history of phonography would be complete without the reminiscences of Mr. MacDonald. We trust that these were committed to paper before his death, for what an inestimable wealth of anecdote concerning the great musicians of the last three or four decades they would contain! How many of the great names owe their recording success to Mr. MacDonald's tireless ingenuity only they can say. Surely they will not be backward now in acknowledging the debt. The average listener is unaware of the tremendous importance of the part played by the recording director, upon whom so much of the record's success or failure depends. In addition to all the complicated and varied technical problems he must meet and conquer, he must also be a diplomat of the most finished type in order to get the best out of high-strung, temperamental artists. Mr. MacDonald's tactfulness and personality worked these miracles for many years. The phonographic world is incalculably the poorer for his loss.

Program Transcriptions

By "OBSERVER"

A new era in phonography begun with the definite announcements
of long-playing records

NO EARNEST observer of the recent phases in the evolution of phonography has failed to recognize the greatest handicap under which recorded music labors—the limitations of the standard ten and twelve-inch, 78 r.p.m. discs. The phonographic booster might shout his lungs out in praise of the faithfulness and sensitivity of modern recording and the superb quality and range of the recorded repertory already available, but his enthusiasm could be extinguished instantaneously by the inevitable complaint of Everyman: "records are too much trouble!" It is all very well to say that the genuinely musical-minded will go to any amount of trouble for the best in music. They have, indeed; the present high stage of the recording art is almost entirely due to their co-operation. But the numbers of such staunch supporters is extremely limited. The average person, even among those interested in music, will not take pains. Other sincere and sensitive souls have turned down records for another—but related—reason, the disconcerting effect upon a large-scale musical work by being broken up into separate small units to fit the limitations of present discs. Lately it has increasingly become evident that either longer playing discs or some new medium of recording was actually demanded to save the phonograph from its present slough of despond.

Needless to say engineers have been laboring with this problem for many years. With the advent of electrical recording it was possible to increase the playing time of a twelve-inch disc slightly: the memorable Brunswick discs of the *Marche Slave* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* scherzo and nocturne marked the highest point attained in the desired direction. Edison, one of the phonograph's fathers, believed he had a forty-minute disc perfected. A few lamentable exhibitions quickly proved how far wrong he was, and in disgust he disowned his child entirely. Recording on a film has been quite successful in the sonal films, and practicable home instruments employing film-records (or in Germany even recordings on paper or wire) have been made. But two obstacles have prevented—and will prevent for a long time—

commercial development of this type of instrument: excessive cost and the necessity of junking the present recorded repertory and beginning all over again.

For the practical minded engineers of the manufacturing companies the problem narrowed itself down to these essentials: A long playing record *must* be produced if the phonograph is to continue to exist on a commercial scale. This new record must be a disc adaptable to use on present instruments. It must for a time at least augment rather than supersede the present type of disc. It must be less fragile than the present disc. It must be produced at low enough cost to enable it to be sold at retail at a price less than what the equivalent number of ordinary discs are sold. A better kind of semi-permanent needle must be developed to play the new disc.

Now the playing time of a disc may be increased in three ways: increasing the size of the disc, increasing the number of sound tracks on the present size of disc, recording and playing the disc at a slower speed (enabling the recording of more sound waves on a given length of needle track). The first method—used in the movies—was impracticable for it would render present types of instruments entirely obsolete. The number of sound tracks might be increased—providing a new material was used which would prevent needle-track-jumping so likely to occur if the number of tracks were increased in the present type of disc. Slowing down the recording speed is practicable within certain limits; certainly one-half the present speed has worked out satisfactorily in the movies.

The course was plain, a satisfactory long playing disc would result from using a 33 1-3 recording (and reproducing) speed, and in addition getting more needle-grooves to the inch by using a new record material. Such a disc might get as many as four old record side to the side. It would require of course instruments capable of shifting easily and accurately between 78 and 33 1-3 r.p.m., but that is not impossible to achieve, and by producing a moderate priced gear shift apparatus it would be possible to convert old instruments to the use of the new records.

Engineers of the Brunswick, Columbia, and Victor companies have been working frantically during the last year on the perfection of these plans. Now Victor comes forward with the actual fruition of its work. Mr. Axel B. Johnson tells me that in recent interviews with Messrs. E. F. Stevens, Jr. and Lanyon of the Brunswick Corporation, and Mr. George C. Jell of the Columbia Phonograph Company, he learned that their companies' experimental work was also nearly completed and that definite announcements may be expected in the very near future.

That the RCA-Victor Company was on the eve of commercial introduction of the new discs was apparent several months ago when word got around that the Philadelphia Symphony had hurriedly been re-assembled and under Dr. Stokowski's baton had made a new recording of Beethoven's C minor Symphony. Now a new version of the Fifth is scarcely phonographic news; but the fact that this fifth was recorded on *one* double-sided record most certainly is news. The recording was made frankly as an experiment, but its success stimulated the hasty fruition of long laid plans and on September 17th the new records and instruments were first demonstrated to an invitation audience at the Savoy-Plaza Hotel. Now come the public announcements, and the instruments will be on sale around the tenth of October; the records themselves around the 30th. Fittingly they are named "program transcriptions" in contradistinction to ordinary records which reproduce only excerpts or portions of a composition.

The announcement at the Savoy-Plaza came as the climax of an evolutionary review of the "musical milestones" in the development of the phonograph, beginning with the earliest crude cylinder models and going up to the best of present day instruments. A movement of Beethoven's fifth symphony was begun, and came to an abrupt stop as the record side ended. But now—the new instrument was started and the complete symphony played through on a single disc.

The new discs are recorded at 33 ¹/₃ revolutions per minute and contain nearly twice the number of grooves on the playing surface as the old discs. They are made of a new composition trade-named "Vitrolac," which like the recent Durium is semi-flexible and practically unbreakable. The new material permits the use of more grooves to the inch and reduces still further that ancient bête-noir, surface noise. The slower turntable speed is obtained by a new gear clutch arrangement which permits instantaneous

shifting between the old and new speeds. Two new types of needles have been introduced with the new discs: both are chromium plated and are differently colored for identification. One type plays approximately twenty-five of the new long-playing discs with out replacement; the other plays around one hundred ordinary records without replacement. The two types are not interchangeable.

A list of some thirty-three long-playing discs has been announced of which (apparently) the Beethoven fifth symphony is the only work as yet specially recorded directly for the new discs. The others include recent and best-selling works re-recorded from its original old style discs. Herein lies one of the supreme advantages of the new system: it enables the wealth of music already recorded to be easily converted from old to new discs. New works will be added as rapidly as possible: original recordings (among them the complete musical score of the current Broadway success, *The Band Wagon*) and re-recordings from the best of the present catalogue.

The prices of the new discs offer a substantial saving over the equivalent number of old records, in addition to the new features of convenience and unbroken continuity.

The following works are listed as twelve-inch discs, \$4.50 each. Except where noted the works are complete on a single disc. Beethoven: Symphony in C minor, played by the Philadelphians under Stokowski; Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker" suite by the Philadelphians; Rimsky's *Grande Paque Russe* overture and Tchaikowski's *Capriccio Italien* (Philadelphia Orchestra); Chopin's Sonata in B flat minor played by Rachmaninoff; Haydn's Symphony No. 4 in D major (Toscanini and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony); the final scene from *Aida* (Ponselle and Martinelli) and the Death Scene from *La Bohème* (Bori and Schipa).

Twelve-inch, \$3.00 each. Beethoven's fourth Symphony (Casals and his Barcelona Orchestra); Grieg's *Peer Gynt* suites Nos. 1 and 2 (Bourdon and the Victor Symphony Orchestra respectively); Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* complete—3 discs (D'Oyly Carte Company) Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* complete—3 discs (La Scala Company).

Ten-inch, \$3.00 each. Strawinski's *Petrouchka* suite (Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra); Bizet's *Carmen* Suite (Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra); Farewell and Death of Boris, and the finale of *Don Quichotte* (Chaliapin); the second Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody* and Weber's *In-*

itation to the Waltz (Cortot); Dvorak's *Carneval* overture, Suk's *Fairy Tale*, and Dvorak's *Slavonic Dance* in G minor (Chicago Symphony Orchestra).

Ten-inch, \$1.75 each. Victor Herbert Melodies Nos. 1 and 2—2 discs each (Victor Orchestra and Salon Group under Shilkret); Siegfried's *Journey to the Rhine* and *Death Music* (conducted by Coates); Schubert Melodies Nos. 1 and 2—1 disc each (Victor Salon Orchestra with John McCormack); Friml Melodies No. 1 (Friml and the Victor Salon Orchestra); Foster Melodies No. 1 (Shilkret and the Victor Orchestra).

Ten-inch, \$1.50 each. *Rhapsody in Blue*, *Two American Sketches*, and *Song of the Bayou* (Whiteman's Orchestra and the Victor Orchestra); *Kamenoi Ostrow*, *Liebestraum*, *In a Persian Market*, *In a Chinese Garden* (Victor Symphony Orchestra and International Concert Orchestra); *Salon Suite No. 1* (Victor Salon Orchestra).

Three new instruments are announced, all of course equipped to shift from the old to the new records, but possessing a number of other new features of considerable interest in themselves. All three are combination phonographs and superheterodyne radios, equipped with automatic volume control and RCA Victor "micro tone control," with completely shielded chassis mechanically insulated from the cabinet by rubber floating—so that chassis and cabinet resonance nullify each other. The phonograph units are equipped with magnetic pick-up and inertia tone arm, and in addition with an automatic record changing device; capacity ten ten-inch records. Model RAE-26 is a nine-tube set using both Super Control and Pentode Radiotrons; the cabinet is walnut veneered. List price, \$247.50, complete with Radiotrons. Model RAE-59 is a ten-tube set with Super Control and Pentode Radiotrons, walnut veneered cabinet, and in addition to the standard features is equipped with home recording apparatus. List price, \$350.00, with Radiotrons. Model RAE-79 is a de luxe thirteen-tube set, using Super Control Radiotrons, and equipped with double amplification—two amplifying units and two electrodynamic speakers providing a remarkable range of undistorted volume range. In addition to the standard features of the other models it is equipped with a home recording device, including a two-button studio type microphone, that will make both six and ten-inch records; also a remote control device and automatic tuning. The cabinet is hand carved armoire solid walnut. List price, \$995.00 including Radiotrons.

An inexpensive gear shift apparatus, designed to enable any standard make of phono-

graph to play the new discs, will shortly be available.

What is the full significance of the final commercial introduction of long playing records? As yet one can only guess wildly. But unquestionably it is a genuine landmark in phonographic progress, a thrilling conquest of an obstacle that has long thwarted the larger development and popularity of phonography. On one hand it brings the phonograph back as serious competitor of the radio even in the field of popular music, convenience of operation, etc., without sacrificing any of the peculiar *selective* qualities of recorded music. On the other, professional musicians and sophisticate music lovers are freed from the handicap of adjusting themselves to the piecemeal presentation of large musical works. No wonder that Dr. Stokowski could write, "The day after the C minor symphony of Beethoven was recorded by the new method, we heard the complete symphony from the proof pressings and after the symphony was ended I realized that I had forgotten where I was, so intense was the state of feeling and so sustained was the mood created. Now that the longest movement of a symphony can be played without interruption, recorded music can offer one of the best ways of listening to music, because the ideal time and place can be chosen, so that the beauty and inspiration of the music can enter deeply into the soul of the listener."

In some ways it is unfortunate that this development should come at a time of impaired public purchasing power, but the depression will not last forever. Perhaps already the up-grade has begun. Certainly without some such radical development the phonograph and records would never be able to profit greatly even by an improvement in general conditions. The step had to come sometime; it is well begun now to take full advantage of the eventual recovery of prosperity. The phonographic past with its blunders and its accomplishments is behind us for good and all. Let us turn toward the future for the exploitation of our vastly more potent medium of musical enjoyment. We have a secure foundation of the present repertory to build on and to adapt to the new discs. The radio has conclusively revealed its limitation to fields of news and extremely "popular" entertainment. The immense educative and serious entertainment potentialities of the phonograph have just be opened up to exploitation. It is squarely up to us phonographic pioneers to prove our faith in recorded music by helping to make that exploitation both commercially and artistically successful.

Ecstasy Without Grímage

By R. D. DARRELL

Embodying a review of Strawinski's "*Symphonie de Psalms*"*

IT SHOULD not be assumed from the fact that *Symphonie de Psalms* was "written for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra" that it is in any sense a *pièce d'occasion*. When Strawinski completed *Le Sacre* he himself realized what much have been obvious to any acute student that he had reached the end of a blind and on the whole unprofitable musical alley. The last word in gargantuanism, in rhythmical frenzy, in tortured color had been said. The work was a masterpiece. One heard it and was devastated. But when one's ears cleared and senses sobered it was with duller, not keener, powers of feeling. Strawinski was not a Richard Strauss to butt his head against an unbudgeable wall, each bump noisier, emptier than the one before. He struck out on a new and more considered course and after a period of floundering in experimental bogs began to mark his path with such milestones as *Apollon Musagète* and *Oedipus Rex*. He was spoken of carelessly as "returning" to Handel or Bach or Verdi. Rather he was concentrating his vast and too versatile talents not to imitate an old style or to create a new one but to *establish* his own, unifying it, as Roger Sessions says, by re-absorbing or re-experiencing the old formulas of music so that they might regain freshness and vitality. (Sessions cites the example of a common D minor triad used as the basis of a critical moment in *Oedipus* with overwhelming and immediate effect.)

Strawinski pushed resolutely forward toward this goal (the witty *Capriccio* is after all a momentary frolicsome digression) with the idea of perhaps rewriting the Russian Liturgical Service, perhaps writing a Mass. The Boston anniversary was merely a fortuitous occasion for completing or finally issuing the work long since decided on.

The *Symphonie de Psalms* bears on its title-page the inscription—enigmatic or presumptuous to many—"composed to the Glory of God." Those who still consider Strawinski a sheer poseur or mountebank take this to be the sublime example of his effrontery. It may of course be that; it may be simply the expression of a devout spirit. I cannot accept it as either. I take it as revelatory of Strawinski's consciousness that has at last reached his goal, the achievement of a work in which the composer is writing not as an individual, flaunting the hall-marks of his personality, "expressing himself" and creating for himself, but as the anonymous composers of the



Gregorian Chants fulfilled a deeper urging, the making of music as a communal creative expression of faith and praise.

Such music is neither archaic or modern. And its lack of time-placement will make it more difficult for superficial listeners than *Le Sacre* which, after the shock of first acquaintance subsided, proved to be quite as much post-war European as it was primitive Russian. The *Symphonie de Psalms* being not the work of a day or a program or a definite color must be heard with unsophisticated ears, "tasted without passion, without impatience." There are no fashions, no tricks of the trade here—vocal and instrumental writing is lean, unadorned, of merciless purity and directness. It makes difficult hearing in the distracting, theatrical atmosphere of the concert hall, and yet it is not strictly church music, flourishing in an almost equally oppressive and artificial atmosphere. Only on discs can one get near the music—become a part of it, experiencing—not merely hearing. Musicians may tell us that even this remarkable example of modern recording loses something of the actual tonal depths and nuance, that it is not as "impressive" as heard in the flesh. But such impressiveness is a matter of actual volume and human bodies. On discs one is stirred by the impressiveness of the music itself, the calm, sustained atmosphere into which every phase (unstriking, uncolored in itself) merges. The music may be heard as it must be heard for full assimilation, paradoxically in a manner at once more impersonal and more supremely personal than

*Strawinski: *Symphonie de Psalms*, for chorus and orchestra, by the Alexis Vlassoff Chorus and the Straram Orchestra, conducted by Igor Strawinski. Columbia Masterworks Set 162 (3 D12s, Alb., 6.00).

any other, known as an active experience in which the listener plays a part no less than the musicians and composer.

The work is well named. It is not a setting of psalms such as Liszt or Franck has given us; it is a *symphony of psalms*. The work is an integral whole. First comes the plea, the eternal anguished "hear my prayer!" spoken here with austerity and perfect simplicity. "For I am a stranger with thee, And a sojourner, as all my fathers were." The choral writing lifts starkly, barely above the unappeased unrest of the orchestra, striking only at the end a full-voiced cry. The thin reedy pipe of the oboe begins the fugal second psalm. The orchestral lines gather into an involved web, plaintive, laborious, a wrestling of the spirit. The chorus begins its song, "I waited patiently for the Lord." Here is nothing of the freshness and innocence of the Gregorian Chants. Such music could only have evolved from a profoundly world-weary generation. Stravinski more than any other man has tested the resources of the music of this age and found the shallowness and rankness with which its feeling is rooted. The psalmist sang of deliverance from the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, but we of Stravinski's age are mired more hopelessly. There is no relief in the resignation and lament of the music. Only, and increasingly toward the end, an inarticulate hope of deliverance. The movement ends suspended in air in incredibly heightened expectancy, resolving at last with miraculous compassion into the serene tranquility and light of the closing psalm's "Alleluia!" With the lifting undulant passage beginning just past the middle of the fifth record side comes a sense of infinite and yet dispassionate rapture, in its majesty and simplicity unlike anything that music has ever known before.

The Psalmist exults:

Praise him with the sound of the trumpets . . .
Praise him with the timbrel and dance . . .
Praise him upon the loud cymbals:
Praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord.

But the crash of literal cymbals would be a vain-glorious tinkling. Stravinski has long since punctured the bubble of vanity and childishness of illustrative music. His music performs the function described by Santayana: giving form to what is naturally inarticulate, expressing the depths of human nature which can speak no language current in the world . . . Vindicating the forgotten regions of the spirit . . .

At the close of the chapter from which I quote (perhaps the most searching and most precious words on the much written and so little understood subject of music) I find the concisest, most eloquent statement of exactly what I believe Stravinski has endeavored and accomplished. The concern of the artist, says Santayana, is to lift experience out of the discord and confusion in which a chaotic age may have plunged it. "The more barbarous his age, the more drastic and violent will be his operation. He will have to shout in a storm. His strength must

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needs be, in such a case, very largely physical and his methods sensational." Stravinski once employed such methods; shouted louder indeed than any of his contemporaries, but unlike some of them realized finally where even the most sensational feats of shouting in this most barbarous—emotionally at least—age would lead. The artist cannot evade his age. Stravinski is of it, but has won beyond it to the antieipation (or is it retrospection?) of a gentler age where "he may grow nobler, and blood and thunder will no longer seem impressive. Only the weak are obliged to be violent; the strong, having all means at command, need not resort to the worst. Refined art is not wanting in power if the public is refined also. And as refinement comes only by experience, by comparison, by subordinating means to ends and rejecting what hinders, it follows that refined mind will really possess the greater volume, as well as the subtler discrimination."

Whether a public of today can follow Stravinski is enigmatic. Where it hissed and applauded Stravinski the sensationalist, it is all too likely to ignore the matured Stravinski. But surely there are those who can recognize, even on these discs—product of a mechanized age—the sweetness and strength of this *Symphony of Psalms*. "Its ecstasy without grimace, its submission without tears, will hold heaven and earth better together—and hold them better apart—than could a mad imagination."

Correspondence

The Editor does not accept any responsibility for opinions expressed by correspondents. No notice will be taken of unsigned letters, but only initials or a pseudonym will be printed if the writer so desires. Contributions of general interest to our readers are welcomed. They should be brief and written on one side of the paper only. Address all letters to CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN, THE PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW, Box 138, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Accountant vs. Dealer

EDITOR, PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW:

This is in answer to Mr. Kleist whose eminently just interpretation of my writings in earlier issues struck *but one* sour note. He differentiates between Franck, the dealer, and Franck, the accounting specialist, pointing out that the exhortation to "extravagance" which I made to the record collecting brotherhood, would not be in my repertoire of advice to business. "Unsound," is the comment.

Well, passing over the fact that accountants,—unlike lawyers—do make mistakes, I would say just this: that to any corporation under my direction, whose own existence depended upon the prosperity of *another* industry, I would say, "Back up this concern to the limit of your treasury."

To the record collectors I say, "Buy records for all you are worth, or in time you won't get any to buy." As I am making no money out of my avocation, I don't care so awfully much whether they buy them from International Records Agency, Royer Smith, Mai, The N. Y. Band Instrument Co., Gramophone Shop, or whoever else makes a serious effort to develop this field in a dignified manner. Of course, I care some, but, in the main, I want to see the industry, as a whole, flourish. I'll be content with my fair cut of the cake.

Richmond Hill, N. Y.

A. J. FRANCK

More Odd Sides

EDITOR, PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW:

Mr. Wendell's interesting article on "Odd Sides" prompts me to call attention to a few from Columbia European lists which are outstanding. In the first place, the British set of the Franck Symphony contains an exquisite orchestral miniature by his most talented pupil, next to D'Indy, namely "Aux étoiles" by Duparc. The next two, in addition to being compositions of much charm and beauty, are of particular interest inasmuch as the composers take part in the performance. On the odd side of the Ireland Cello Sonata the composer plays his piano piece, "April," (British), and the odd side of Pizzetti's "Tre canti ad una giovane fidanzata" is an Aria in D. Both pieces are well worth examining, even though they must be imported.

Speaking of D'Indy, the gramophone has made a most inauspicious start in acquainting its devotees with his music, the Prelude to Fervaal being inconsequential, the Wallenstein excerpt being an early and weak work, and the Finale of the Symphony

on a Mountain Air not at all characteristic of the composer, who is a real modern master in some half dozen works, the most important of which are perhaps the Second Symphony, the Second String Quartet, the Istar Variations, the "Jour d'été a la Montagne" and the Souvenirs. Here is music to be set by the side of the best of Sibelius, Bax, Elgar, Delius and Loeffler.

I am with you when you say that the Bach G minor organ fugue deserves to rank with his noblest creations in this form, nevertheless I still maintain that it is of less interest than the preceding Fantasia, which is an entirely unique composition, both for Bach and for the period in which it was written. This is not true of the fugue, masterly as it is. H. M. V. issues the work complete on one record, and those who are annoyed by the excessive use of the reeds in the French recordings will surely prefer this version by Cunningham.

New York City

HENRY S. GERSTLE

Foreign Prices

EDITOR, PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW:

I found the July issue of your magazine very interesting. Something of the original spirit of the publication seems to have been recaptured and I note much controversial matter in the Correspondence Columns. As record prices seem to be up for discussion, perhaps other readers will find the following of interest:—

"From a reliable source the Talking Machine and Wireless Trade News learns that on September 1st, the Gramophone Co., Ltd. (H. M. V.), will announce the following reductions in the prices of their records to the public: 10-inch plum from 3s. to 2s. 6d.; 12-inch plum from 4s. 6d. to 4s.; 10-inch black from 4s. 6d. to 4s.; 12-inch black from 6s. 6d. to 6s.; 10-inch red from 6s. to 4s.; 12-inch red from 8s. 6d. to 6s."

While a good electric reproducer at a price of one hundred fifty dollars is needed, readers who possess a thoroughly good, acoustic machine would be better off with this sum invested in records, I believe.

Haydn's Quartet in B Major, Opus 49, as played by the Buxbaum Quartet on Polydors 29234-5; 29236-7; 29238-9 is a set that no one interested in chamber-music should overlook, and one of the finest examples of Quartet recording that I have heard.

Houston, Texas

D. E. DANCY

Old Time Songs

EDITOR, PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW:

I have not noticed any comment in your pages on the recent publication of a book on the most celebrated songs of the past, and I am sure that many old-time record collectors would be highly interested in James J. Geller's collection of anecdotes, facts, and legends.

"Oh, Promise Me," for instance was an early ballad de Koven was forced to interpolate into the score of "Robin Hood" in order to please the whim of a temperamental prima donna. Harvard students, sitting in the first ten rows of the Columbia Theatre,

Boston, picked up the chorus of Blanche Ring's song in "The Defender" so lustily that the instant success of "In the Good Old Summertime" was assured. "Sweet Marie" was the cause of Raymond Moore leaving the original cast of "Africa". He quit when the producers demanded him to shelve the song. His successor, Charles Hopper, liked it equally well, however, and despite the ban sang it at the opening performance of "Africa" with such success that it was returned to the score in good standing.

Messrs. S. E. Levy and Ulysses J. Walsh should add an appendix to Mr. Geller's "Famous Songs and Their Stories" telling some of the phonographic anecdotes that have grown up around them. And when shall we have a "Famous Records and Their Stories"? Toledo, Ohio S. C.

The McKinley Record

EDITOR, PHONOGRAPH MONTHLY REVIEW:

Mr. Frank Dorian of the Columbia Phonograph Company, assures me that the wide-spread impression that President McKinley recorded Columbia Record No. A278 is incorrect? This record has been believed by a great many people to have been recorded by McKinley at the Buffalo Exposition, but as a matter of fact it was made in 1902 by the ubiquitous Len Spencer, the first phonograph "immortal," and was merely a re-hash of a speech McKinley did deliver a day or so before he was killed. Mr. Dorian points out that while no claim was made that McKinley did make the record, the artist's name was omitted from the label and the Columbia Company at that time was not at all averse to purchasers believing they heard the dead man's own voice. Nowadays, as he points out, such a procedure would be regarded as entirely unethical. Marion, Virginia ULYSSES J. WALSH

ECHOES

Death of Franz Schalk

ONE of the few remaining masters of the grand old school of conductors died in Vienna on September 3rd. Franz Schalk had been director of the Vienna Opera and Philharmonic Orchestra for many years, and during the last few years made a number of excellent recordings." Except for a version of the Schubert "Unfinished" symphony issued by Columbia, his works were recorded by H. M. V.-Victor, and include several Beethoven Symphonies (notably the fifth, sixth, and eighth), and smaller works.

Columbia Expansion Program

The Columbia Company, through Mr. W. C. Fuhri, Vice-President in charge of sales and advertising, has announced an expansion program, adding to their present lines in order to enable their dealers to cover a wider field, diversifying their stock in order to appeal to the consumer at all seasons of the year. The Fada Radio line will now be distributed through eight of the Columbia branches in various parts of the country, and other radio lines, in addition to the new Columbia radio models—shortly to be announced—will gradually be added. Several of the branches will also distribute Norge and other electric refrigerators,

and for special novelty Columbia is bringing out a popular-priced home dry cleaner, using a non-explosive fluid, and bearing the name Columbia.

As a part of the expansion program Mr. Arthur A. Trostler has been appointed general sales manager. Mr. Trostler, previously a sales executive for the Freed-Eisemann and Brunswick Radio Corporations, has an enviable reputation as a builder up of national distribution in the phono-radio field.

Television Program

While leading officials in the radio field reiterate their announcements that commercial television, even in its earliest stages, will not be presented to the public before the fall of 1932, and a number of small companies, devoted entirely to television, are endeavoring to float huge stock issues, bits of news leak out from time to time indicating that steady progress is being made toward practicable television reproduction. The latest news is contained in the RCA Victor Company's application for permission to erect an experimental station in Portland, Maine. The application reveals that the new RCA apparatus does not employ the scanning disc used in most other systems, but a cathode ray tube into which an "electric gun" (whatever that may be) fires light rays. It is claimed to be capable of transmitting a picture of 240 lines with thirty exposures a second, which would be a tremendous improvement, as the best obtained hitherto has been 60 lines and 20 exposures a second.

NBC Prize Contest

Ambitious composers have a new mark to shoot at in the prizes offered by the National Broadcasting Corporation for a symphonic work taking not over twelve minutes to play. There are five prizes ranging from \$5000 to \$500. The contest closes December 31st and is open only to American citizens or aliens who have taken out their first citizenship papers.

Victor Record Reviews Promotion

Indefatigable correspondents who for years have been invoking the phonographic gods for more and better publicity will derive some comfort from the recently announced plans by the RCA Victor Company to promote newspaper record review columns. Most newspapers as yet do not realize that records may be news and so worthy of comment for their own sweet sake, but when records become—like radio and movies—a business, that is when they are advertised, the papers begin show some interest. The new advertising campaign is to consist of small advertisements, devoted entirely to records to appear in some 230 newspapers. Advertisements of specific records will be timed to appear in conjunction with the release of moving pictures and theatrical productions plugging the same tunes. Apparently popular discs will hold most of the limelight, but once there is the opportunity, more serious fare can be expected to find some small share of attention. Review copies of the latest recordings are now being sent to music critics on some eighty-five newspapers, twenty-five magazines, and several college publications. It is gratifying to see tangible evidence that the inestimable publicity worth of such reviews is beginning to be appreciated.

Reviews of New Records

Special reviews of larger works ~ classified reviews of domestic releases
lists of new European releases ~ current importations

Chopin — Concerto and Etudes

CHOPIN: *Concerto in F minor*, Op. 21, for piano and orchestra, played by ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN with the LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, conducted by JOHN BARBIROLLI. (On the 8th side Rubinstein, solo, plays the *Waltz in C sharp minor*.) VICTOR Masterpiece Set M-110 (4 D12s, Alb., \$6.00).

CHOPIN: 12 *Etudes*, Op. 10; 12 *Etudes*, Op. 25; *Trois Nouvelles Etudes*; played by ROBERT LORTAT. COLUMBIA Masterwork Set 163 (8 D12s, Alb., \$12.00).

"Israfel across the Gulf" indeed! Chopin is making a determined bid for come-back honors, and my recent article coincided rather neatly with his current phonographic renaissance. The ballades, a lengthy selection of the mazurkas, a concerto, and the complete set of etudes within three months . . . surely the manufacturers hold firmly to the faith that Chopin is still well established in record buyers' hearts. The present sets are not first recordings: we have already had the F minor concerto from Columbia and 24 of the studies from Victor. (The three additional études included in the Lortat album are the first recordings to be issued as a group—one was released by Edison during its brief needle-cut record days). Accordingly comparisons as well as appraisals are in order. This is rather unfortunate as far as the concerto is concerned, for Marguerite Long's version (reviewed by Nicolas Slonimsky in the September 1930 P. M. R.) is an acknowledged triumph of phonographic pianism . . . sensitive, delicate, feminine, polished. Arthur Rubinstein could scarcely hope to surpass such excellences; it is mightily to his credit that he attains so remarkably high standard of excellences of a somewhat different sort. His reading is as masculine as Miss Long's is feminine. His assurance is no less, his playing perhaps less sensitive but scarcely less polished, his spirit perhaps a shade brighter. Crispness and directness are the key-notes of both the solo and the highly competent orchestral performances. He avoids an excess of sentimentality no less than Miss Long, but in delicacy of fancy and lyrical nuance she is incomparable. Let us say that hers is the more intimate and Chopinesque version, and Rubinstein's a concert version of admirable alertness and point.

That both pianists so successfully animate the ageing music is no small tribute to the freshness and vitality of their musical outlook. It is too bad that the E minor concerto has not fared as well (Rosenthal's version suffers from totally inadequate recording, and Brailowsky's from coarseness of grain and a super-abundance of the soloist's personality). Both works are early; despite the opus numbering, the F minor concerto was written a year before the other, and as a whole is considerably superior. This

is back-handed praise, but comparing the concertos with the ballades, mazurkas, or scherzos, it is the best I can do. The concertos are solo salon pieces transposed with little expertness to the orchestral stage. Mildly bright, mildly showy, mildly poetic; these are the compositions of a considerable talent, but certainly not the voice of Israfel.

We have already had a complete set of the 24 études from Bachaus; Lortat duplicates these and adds the three "new" études specially composed for the piano method of Moscheles and Fétis (the labels err in terming these posthumous works). Several years since the Bachaus appeared have brought improvements in piano recording that give Lortat a generous advantage, but this is nearly counterbalanced by Bachaus' greater concert experience and assurance. I have played both sets through comparing the individual performances, and after overcoming a slight initial prejudice against Lortat's somewhat studious manner and lack of some indefinable quality—abandon, verve, or perhaps very marked personality—I was rather surprised to see how often he shared honors with Bachaus. Many of the studies are definitely superior in the Bachaus versions. His superior polish, sense of the dramatic, and flexibility (although to tell the truth that is not a quality for which Bachaus is usually famed) give him a considerable edge over the less imaginative Lortat. I am speaking purely of interpretative qualities; Lortat is scarcely an inferior technician, rather he often-times fails to point his technical feats, whereas Bachaus brings them off with the ever so slight flourish that marks the virtuoso as distinct from the scholar. Yet when I balance up the entire list, it is surprising how often Lortat's sincerity and restraint mark his versions as good or better. Then, too, Lortat is well served by the powerful recording in such pieces as the "Winter Wind" and the tumultuous last étude. I doubt if he is a great pianist, he lacks versatility, geniality, polish, and imagination; his range of both lyrical and dramatic nuances is limited, but he does give us a very able and, on the whole, very musicianly exposition of the studies. As such they are well suited to recording. To ask for more is to ask for more than high talent, and genius is seldom at beck and call.

Harking back to our separation of Chopin's works into those of the salon composer and those of one of the musical demi-gods, I find that at least Huneker considered there could be no doubt in the case of the études. "When most of his piano music has gone the way of all things fashioned by mortal hands, these studies will endure, will stand for the nineteenth century, as Beethoven crystallized the eighteenth and Bach the seventeenth centuries in piano music. Chopin is a classic." Filtered through one's own fingers, that leap with glee to meet the challenge of supremely

COLUMBIA MASTERWORKS*

— New Issues —



STRAVINSKY: Symphonie de Psalmes. Columbia announces with peculiar satisfaction a recording of the most important work composed in many years and one of the most important of the century — Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms, written in 1930, "to the glory of God," dedicated to the Boston Symphony Orchestra for its fiftieth anniversary and first performed in America by that organization. The work exhibits deep religious feeling, is one of the sincerest expressions of Stravinsky's notable genius and one of his most inspired utterances to the present time. The music is primitive and austere with all the severe beauties which these conditions render possible in the hands of a musician of Stravinsky's great gift. It is a matter of gratification that this new work appears first in America and under Columbia label, with the authentic reading of the composer.

Columbia Masterworks Set No. 162

Stravinsky: Symphonie de Psalmes, for Orchestra and Chorus. In 6 Parts. Igor Stravinsky, Conducting Orchestre des Concerts Straram and Alexis Vlassoff Chorus. Three twelve inch Records, \$6.00 with Album.

CHOPIN: Études for Pianoforte. This new set of the beautiful Etudes of Chopin is notable for its completeness, including as it does the three Posthumous Etudes, seldom heard. Far from fulfilling the dry dictionary definition of a "study" they are inescapably and universally tuneful... Chopin himself is said to have declared that the third Etude contained the best melody he had ever written—an opinion shared by many who have come after him. This complete collection of the Etudes is recorded by the admired French pianist, Robert Lortat.



Columbia Masterworks Set No. 163

Chopin: Études for Pianoforte. Set of 8 Records. By Robert Lortat. \$12.00 with Album.

IL TROVATORE (Verdi). The most popular opera of Verdi and possibly the most popular of all ever written, now appears in complete form on the Columbia list.

What memories of imperishable melodies the name of Il Trovatore brings to mind!—The Miserere, the Anvil Chorus, Di Quella Pira, Tacea la Notte, Stride la Vampa, Ai Nostri Monti, Il Balen, Deserto sulla Terra—the tale is almost endless. They are all here, sung by some of Italy's best singers, supported by the great orchestra and chorus of La Scala Theatre.

In the chronology of Verdi's works Il Travatore followed Rigoletto after an interval of two years. The brilliant success of the first performance heralded a popularity that is practically as great today after three quarters of a century.

Columbia Operatic Series No. 9

Il Trovatore, Opera in Four Acts by Verdi. Recorded in 28 parts by Eminent Artists of Italy, with Chorus of La Scala Theatre and Milan Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Cav. Lorenzo Molajoli. Sung in Italian. In 2 Albums. \$21.00 complete.



"Magic Notes"

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Columbia "NEW PROCESS" **Records**
Viva-tonal Recording - The Records without Scratch



"Magic Notes"

Columbia Phonograph Co., Inc., New York City

ingenious digital devices, it is easy to subscribe to Huneker's pronunciamiento. Listening to these works through the phonographic medium, divorced from the sorcery of personified virtuosity one's admiration for Chopin's ingenuity remains, but one's estimates of the actual feeling-content of the music are more mixed. Surely there is a greater wealth of feeling than in any other studies ever written for the keyboard—with the obvious exception of the *Well-Tempered Clavier*—but where Bach's pieces are purer music than they are fugues, are not Chopin's finer studies than they are music? But perhaps I am unimaginative when I find glittering passage-work and not the wailing of the winter wind in the 23rd etude, and in the "Revolutionary" étude Kullak's "bravura study of the highest order for the left hand" rather than Huneker's "one of the greatest dramatic outbursts in piano literature." But it is not necessary to hold that the studies have the dramatic breadth of the ballades, the scherzos, or the Fantasy in F minor to enjoy them as examples of the most expert craftsmanship pianism has ever known.

R.D.D.

II. Trovatore

VERDI: *Il Trovatore*, complete opera, performed by soloists and chorus of LA SCALA, MILAN, with the MILAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, conducted by LORENZO MOLAJOLI. COLUMBIA Operatic Series No. 9 (14 D12s, Alb., \$21.00).

Leonora	Bianca Scacciati
Azucena	Giuseppina Zinetti
Manrico	Francesco Merli
Count di Luna	Enrico Molinari
Ferrando	Corrado Zambelli
Ines	Ida Mannarini
Ruiz	Emilio Venturini
Aged gypsy	Enzo Arnaldi

The latest of the Columbia operatic series needs no comment as far as the music is concerned. *Il Trovatore* always has been and probably always will be one of the prime favorites of the Italian repertory. The gallery appeal of the album is assured by its very release. In estimating its performance and recording qualities the most commendable to my mind are those which bring freshness and renewed vitality to a time-battered score, without of course adulterating in the slightest the pure Italianate vein. The present set passes this test with first honors. The recording is strong with few of the lapses into blatant over-amplification that marred so many of the early opera sets from all companies. Molajoli, as is his wont, rules the soloists with an iron hand; it is his personality, not theirs, that completely dominates the performance. Decisive, assured, crisp, his conducting keeps the singers held brilliantly in line, and instead of the erratic, oftentimes hysterical display of temperamental vocalization that so often passes for singing in *Trovatore*, we get a keen, alert, decidedly convincing performance of the solos as well as the ensembles. And as ever with Molajoli's set the orchestral playing is a model of its kind. Whatever one thinks of *Trovatore* as an opera this performance will never bore or repel, and should give far more rounded pleasure than one which depends entirely on the antics of a highly touted star to whose whims everything is subordinated. If an opera is to be a one-man work, by all means let it be a conductor's aiming, as here, solely at a forthright, powerful exposition of the score as it is written.

Schwanda

WEINBERGER: *Schwanda, the Bagpipe Player—Fantasia*, played by the OPERA ORCHESTRA, BERLIN-CHARLOTTENBURG, conducted by ALOIS MELICHAR. BRUNSWICK 90196 (D12, \$1.50).

Few contemporary operas really catch on with the public. Some make a momentary sensation and quickly die out as the once acclaimed *Jonny spielt auf* is fading from the musical horizon. But Jaromir Weinberger, a thirty-five year old Bohemian, seems to have turned the trick of writing an opera that is destined to last. The scenario of *Schwanda* derives from an old European fairy story common to the literatures of several countries. Weinberger has taken the old tale and fitted it to delightfully wholesome music largely based on Bohemian folk material. The opera was first produced at Prague in 1927 and almost immediately began its successful course at all the leading European opera houses. Next winter, with quite amazing promptness, it is scheduled for a Metropolitan production. Portions of the music have already reached these shores via the batons of Coates and others, and already the Polka and Furiant at least seem to have gained a strong foothold in the orchestral repertory. Several recordings have been made in Europe, but Brunswick is the first to make one available here. I haven't heard the others, but I fail to see how either Blech or Weissmann could surpass Melichar in the exposition of this bright music, which at its best is not unworthy of comparison with that of the *Bartered Bride*. Weinberger is no Smetana, but he is a composer of high spirits and good taste. There is nothing forced or affected in the music to *Schwanda*. Without any pretentiousness it succeeds in blitheness and vivacity where so many heaven-storming present day composers have miserably failed. One is grateful to Brunswick for bringing it out. The appeal of the disc to almost every type of taste should give it a well deserved popularity.

The selections played include the Introduction, Polka, Furiant, Ballad, Song of Dorotka, Entrance of *Schwanda*, Interlude, and Finale.

O.C.O.

La Valse

RAVEL: *La Valse*, choreographic poem, and Debussy: *Danse*, orchestrated by RAVEL, played by the BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, conducted by SERGE KOUSSEVITSKY. VICTOR 7413-4 (2 D12s, \$2.00 each).

Last month Brunswick released a reading of *La Valse* by the Lamoureux Orchestra, conducted by Albert Wolff, and thus invited comparisons with the two existing versions, one interpreted for Columbia by Philippe Gaubert, the other for Victor by Albert Coates. Gaubert, we said, never forgets that however abstractly Ravel may glorify the waltz, after all Viennese society dances to its stirring rhythms. Coates, for his part, prefers to view the music intellectually: creating the waltz out of chaos and developing it gradually into an apotheosis. And Wolff, we found to our surprise, takes a sort of middle course, regarding the work simply as a brilliant (if somewhat labored) orchestral fantasy. Each version must find its followers; none could satisfy all. And so, we thought, there the matter must end. But no. Calmly, proudly, as if his rivals never existed, Dr. Koussevitsky raises his sympathetic baton. We feel

everything—even consciousness — slipping away. There is nothing but seething, groaning, primeval mud; and in it a germ is fermenting. The germ becomes a seed; the seed takes root and forces its way to the surface; *c'est la Valse!* An innocent little waltz, to be sure, yet having in it a promise of its immortality. It gains strength and courage. It has some tremendous emotional experience which it cannot survive: alas, it has burned itself out. And then from its ashes rises a Spirit indomitable, a violent, deathless urge, awful in its simplicity, simple in its terrible power.

And so does Koussevitsky transcend competition. Gaubert's dancers can dance more surely here; Coates apotheosizes to a lesser heaven; Wolff's brilliance by comparison disappears.

Ravel must be greatly pleased. He seems to stand, the great critic, right in the midst of things. This, he cries, is what the Viennese tried to do; this is what they did. And was it worth doing? To hear is to believe.

The *Danse* of Debussy is a rare thing. In Ravel's skillful adaptation it shows a fresh and lively spirit not usually expected from the composer of *L'Après midi d'un faune*, but found occasionally, as in *Festivals* and the delightful *Marche Ecossaise*. (Note: will Dr. Koussevitsky please record the latter)? Like the *Triana* of Albeniz, which it resembles, this *Danse*, after you've heard it, makes you (futilely) want to hum it.

W.T.B.

Mikado

SULLIVAN: THE MIKADO, abridged opera, given by the COLUMBIA LIGHT OPERA COMPANY with Orchestra conducted by JOSEPH BATTEN. COLUMBIA 2517-22-D (6 D10s, 75c each, no album).

The Mikado and Poo-Bah	Robert Carr
Nanki-Poo	Dan Jones
Ko-Ko	Appleton Moore
Pish-Push	Randall Jackson
Yum-Yum	Alice Lilley
Pitti-Sing	Joan Cross
Peep-Bo and Katisha	Nellie Walker

Incomparable as the D'Oyly Carte Gilbert & Sullivan recordings are, there is one serious "catch" to them—they are decidedly expensive. If one *can* afford them—lucky the person!—one is assured of getting the finest Gilbert & Sullivan to be heard today on any stage or disc. But there is a very urgent need for a reasonably complete set of the best-liked numbers, sang by competent but less noted artists, and issued at "popular" prices. This need is very satisfactorily filled by the present Columbia set of black-label ten-inch discs; I trust that G. & S. fans with lean purses will be properly appreciative. Considering the exceedingly modest cost of the set it is done decidedly well. I feel that Appleton Moore's slow pace and exaggerated style in the "got them on the list" song (2518-D), and a lack of snap and verve in "The flowers that bloom in the spring" and some of the other songs, detracts more from the performances than the lack of the D'Oyly Carte Company's superb virtuosity and polish, which after all could not be expected here. On the other hand the small but alert chorus does fine versions of "Three little maids from school," the madrigal, "Brightly dawns our wedding day," and the finale. Alice Lilley's

"The sun whose rays" is easily the best of the solos, very deftly sung. Mr. Batten's orchestra which accompanies all but three numbers does some crisp unpretentious playing.

Of the individual discs the best is 2519-D, containing "Three little maids," "Were you not to Ko-Ko plighted?", and the men's trio, "I am so proud" ("... chopper on a big black block"). Second, 2520-D, containing the "The sun whose rays" and the madrigal, "Brightly dawns our wedding day." The perennial spring flowers bloom on 2521-D, and the "Tit Willow" song is on 2522-D.

"The Pastorale"

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 6, in F major*, ("Pastorale"), played by the STATE OPERA ORCHESTRA, BERLIN, conducted by HANS PFITZNER. (On the 12th side: *Trio in B flat major*, op. II, ("Street-song")—Adagio, played by the MUNICH CHAMBER TRIO (RAUCHERSEN, piano; KOHL, clarinet; DISELEZ, 'cello). BRUNSWICK Album Set No. 26. (6 D12s, Alb., \$9.00).

Since its first audition, the "Pastorale" symphony has been a fruitful subject for discussion. The frankly programmatic titles attached to the various sections have been somewhat discounted by the contradictory statement about "expression of feeling" and "painting," and the music itself is equally equivocal. The first and even the fifth movements might be considered quite apart from their titles, although with a distinctly pastoral flavour, but the fourth, the Storm, and the second with its bird calls are more distinctly descriptive. In this field, to be sure, they are far from the first or even the most meticulously pictorial up to their time, but for a number of reasons they have had more authority and provoked more discussion than their predecessors. Even to attempt a settlement of a controversy which has already been the cause of so many articles and pamphlets, is obviously far beyond the scope of this review. But certainly, the sanction of the "expression of feeling," although perhaps not so amenable to cheapness, has been more deleterious to the art of music than the sanctioning of objective descriptiveness.

In this particular case, I confess to belonging to the class which finds the sentimental and Rousseauistic effusions of the symphony dull and over long-drawn-out, instead of to its fervid admirers. The Scherzo has the traditional Beethoven vigour, but in the other movements the development and repetition of material not originally extremely interesting tends to boredom. No doubt Pfitzner's slightly slow *tempi* add to that impression, in this case.

Pfitzner had no easy task before him if he was to surpass the already existing sets of the Sixth Symphony. Although I have not heard it, I have been given the impression that the Schalk—H. M. V. set is very good, and certainly the Weingartner and Koussevitzky versions, each in its own way, are of outstanding excellence, the former being probably its conductor's best recorded appearance, and the latter

likewise epoch-making. Unfortunately, after hearing it, one must confess that Pfitzner's presentation does not belong in the unusual class. Yet let me hasten to remove the impression that there is anything definitely wrong with the interpretation. Its chief faults are negative. The various directions in the score for *piano* and *forte*, etc., are most meticulously observed, and one certainly does not look for anything tremendously brilliant or exciting in this music. The chief opportunity for interpretation lies, in fact, in the direction of delicacy and refinement, and it is here that the reading is disappointing. For that, no doubt, a perfect orchestral instrument is necessary, and possibly a less scholarly temperament than is Pfitzner's, but without it the highest praise (no small one) which can be bestowed is that of "commendably accurate." For this reason, the first, second and fifth movements lose much of the interest which could be given them by a lighter touch. Yet they acquire a certain richly romantic tinge, which, especially in the last movement, is not unattractive or inappropriate. The Scherzo, however, is played with a fine broad vigour which is exceedingly suitable and effective. This excellence is continued in the Storm movement, where Pfitzner seemingly aims to match Beethoven's comparative restraint and commendably avoids any undue theatricality directed towards a cheap and merely realistic impression. The recording throughout, although not new, is clear and good, transmitting with accuracy the various choirs—even in *ff*—as well as the many *p* passages. The Storm is remarkable for its extreme dynamic changes, thus approximating more nearly than usual, although, of course, still far from attaining, the variations of an actual orchestra.

A very delightful excerpt serves as a filler for the twelfth side. Apparently the same organization (the Munich Chamber Trio) has recorded the whole of the opus II in five parts for Polydor, and after hearing this sample, I regret that Brunswick has not seen fit to give us the whole of it. Naïve "Galanteriemusik" of the most obvious kind, it nevertheless makes extremely agreeable listening of a kind of which we get too little nowadays. The Trio, of which the clarinet part is alternatively scored for violin, was dedicated to the mother of Prince Liechnowsky, and published on Oct. 3, 1798.

ROBERT H. S. PHILLIPS

"Archduke" Trio

BEETHOVEN: *Trio No. 7, in B flat major*, op. 97, (the "Archduke"), played by ALFRED CORTOT, JACQUES THIBAUD and PABLO CASALS. VICTOR Masterpiece Set No. 92. (5 D12s, Alb., \$12.50).

Written down March 3-26, 1811, and dedicated to the Archduke Rudolf, the opus 97 marks virtually the end as well as the highest development of Beethoven's works in the field of the pianoforte trio. And yet I must confess that I do not find it a supremely great composition. The impression, although always one of good and even interesting workmanship, is that the music often stops there. The first movement I

find the best, with its two pregnant themes. The second movement, which is a scherzo, is not lacking in grace and piquant interest, but the Andante, despite its lovely episodes seems somewhat overlong and un-unified, although this latter appearance may be partly due to the fact that the changes in mood and in tempo correspond to breaks between sides and may thus be unconsciously accentuated by the players. The whole Trio, while nowhere expressing profound emotion, is frequently the vehicle for a rather unsophisticated sentiment and variety of mood, which make it agreeable listening, if one does not expect too much or is not too serious in his approach.

But whatever the musical qualities of the work, one cannot carp at the performance. All three players treat it with the utmost care and consideration, and the felicity of their interpretation is such that every ounce of meaning and beauty is extracted from the notes. As ever, Casals appears as the outstanding member of the trio. To mention the numerous places where his performance is worthy of praise, would be impossible—perhaps most notable is the phrasing of the *sotto voce* passages about half-way through the first side of the third movement—others are the pizzicati at the beginning of part two, and the whole of the Scherzo. Cortot also is particularly happy and crisp in this movement, although this style is not so appropriate to the Andante. Not less outstanding than the performance is the recording, which is fully up to the previous high standard maintained for this group. The piano at moments approaches perfection although always a little cold and brittle. The set is thus a worthy successor to those which have preceded it, and taking into consideration the celebrity of the composition recorded, its issue in this country may be termed an event.

R.H.S.P.

Symphonie de Psalmes

Strawinski: *Symphonie de Psalmes*, for chorus and orchestra, by the ALEXIS VLASSOFF CHORUS and the STRARAM ORCHESTRA, conducted by IGOR STRAWINSKI. COLUMBIA Masterworks Set No. 162 (3 D12s, Alb., \$6.00).

The setting of three psalms for chorus and orchestra, dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and acclaimed by many as Strawinski's masterpiece, is recorded by Columbia with excellent clarity and force. Its prompt release (before that abroad) is to be keenly appreciated. The music is discussed in detail in the article, "Ecstasy Without Grimace", on page 6 of this issue.



SONGS

SCHUBERT: *Am Meer* and *An die Musik*, sung in German by HEINRICH SCHLUSNUS, with piano accompaniments by FRANZ RUPP. BRUNSWICK 85004 (D10, \$1.25).

The names of two such musicianly collaborators as Schlusnus and Rupp guarantee marked interest to this disc. The lieder here are faithfully sung with no attempt to brighten the somewhat oppressive sombreness of mood, and the excellent recording aids in placing this disc high up among the fine Brunswick-Polydor Schlusnus series.

Eili Eili and *David Hamelech*, sung in Yiddish by BELLE BAKER, with chorus and the BRUNSWICK CONCERT ORCHESTRA conducted by VICTOR YOUNG. BRUNSWICK 20101 (D12, \$1.25).

Whether or not the authorship of *Eili Eili* has been definitely proved to be that of a living composer, the song itself is so volkstümlich that it has been heartily adopted as genuine Yiddish folk stuff. Belle Baker, a noted Jewish star of vaudeville stage and sound films, has made a specialty of it on her programs. Miss Baker herself would surely lay no claim to musicianship of a high order. Her performance has none of the finished artistry of that of Nina Koshetz or even Sophie Braslau. It is unrestrainedly melodramatic; the voice is choked with excessive pathos; the tone is often hard and shrill. Yet somehow or other (and I doff my critical cap to Miss Baker), her passionate sincerity and whole-hearted submergence of herself in the song "gets it across" as few lieder artists would be able to do. The companion folk piece is even more effective by its greater variety of contrasts: the dramatic canvas is surprisingly broad, and in the brilliant arrangement used here (Victor Young's?), the song has genuine sweep and power. *David Hamelech* (King David) is an appeal to the great leader to arise from his grave and guide his people again. He hears the call of the "shofar" (trumpet) and arises. Sitting on his gravestone he plays his violin (David apparently was a versatile musician), and Israel knows a new faith and hope. The song ends in an exuberant march with a chorus of shrill, but strangely effective boys' voices augmenting the coarsely dark and powerful tones of the soloist. The disc should have a marked popular appeal, and not merely a national one. The genuine in music is not restricted to the aesthetic heights alone.

TOSSELLI: *Serenade*, and LEONCAVALLO: *Mattinata*, sung by RICHARD TAUBER, with accompaniments by DAJOS BELA'S CONCERT ORCHESTRA. COLUMBIA G-4052-M (D10, \$1.25).

SCHUMANN: *Die beiden Grenadiere*, and HERMANN: *Drei Wanderer*, sung in German by RICHARD TAUBER, with orchestral accompaniments conducted by ERNST HAUKE. COLUMBIA G-9043-M (D12, \$2.00).

Both discs were originally released in the Odeon catalogue, and both are characteristically Tauberian. The Toselli and Leoncavallo morceaux are as well-worn tenor fare as any songs can be, but the freshness, spontaneity, and ease of Tauber's versions succeed miraculously in making one forget that fact. To put it in the vernacular, Tauber has vocal "it,"

and the vivid personality of his singing is certainly not dimmed and in all probability brightened by its transference to discs. To hear him sing the *Serenade* or such things as the perennial *Ay-Ay-Ay* is an actually exciting experience. And yet this man is—or was—a Mozartian artist par excellence . . . can that faculty remain unspoiled by his present success in lighter fare? A disturbing thought; let us banish it. The twelve-inch disc reveals him in more vigorous material and more expansive mood. Tauber's singing of the Schumann song is too care-free and easily virtuoso to be soundly dramatic, but the mere exercise of this amazing voice is a delight to the ear. Herrmann's rollicking *Drei Wanderer* is better suited to Tauber's blithe manner. He shows less tendency to over-sing here and tosses off that dramatic ballad with exhilarating gusto.

BENELLI: *Ninna-Nanna*, and LONGAS: *Gitana*, sung in Italian by Tito Schipa with orchestral accompaniments. VICTOR 1532 (D10, \$1.50).

RODRIGUEZ: *La Cumparsita*, and FAGLIAFERRI: *Ammore Canta*, sung in Spanish by TITO SCHIPA with orchestral accompaniments. VICTOR (Spanish list) 1488 (D10, \$1.50).

Benelli's expressive Venetian berceuse is already available in at least one excellent version, that by the Florentine Choir (I think) for Victor. But Schipa's solo performance is no less gracious and warmly colored. The accompaniment, with its inevitable violin obbligato—fortunately sparingly used—is perhaps a shade too expressive, but Schipa's singing is irreproachable. Longas's infectiously rhythmed *Gitana* is done very deftly, in both the piquant accompaniment and the broad, easy flow of the songful melody. The songs on the Spanish disc are cast in more conventional mold, and while Schipa tosses off the familiar *Cumparsita* and the brightly sentimental Fagliaferri song neatly enough, he obviously takes less pains, and is not above dropping into frankly Italianate vein.

La Marsellese and *Himno de Riego*, sung in Spanish by MIGUEL FLETA with choral and orchestral accompaniments. VICTOR (Spanish list) 1537 (D10, \$1.50).

Decidedly bombastic performances, coarsely recorded and revealing small care for tonal niceties, particularly on the part of the chorus. O.C.O.

AUVERGNE FOLK SONGS (arr. CANTELOUBE): *Three Borées* and *Bailero*, sung in the native dialect by MADELEINE GREY, with orchestral accompaniments conducted by ELIE COHEN... COLUMBIA 50303-D (D12, \$1.25).

The gold medal vocal disc of the month and one of the finest phonographic contributions to folk song literature, comparable to the memorable Eskimo and Canadian songs recorded by Juliette Gaultier. Contemporary performance of authentic folk material falls into two classes, presentation of the unaltered melodies unaccompanied (the method of Miss Gaultier) and in modernized harmonizations. (Arrangements in which the melodic material itself is altered are beyond the artistic pale.) The harmonized arrangements may be subdivided into versions that are written as simply as possible, providing a pleasing background, but not detracting attention from the melody, and more elaborate or "advanced" versions. Cecil Sharp's English folk song arrangements and the French songs arranged by

Tiersot fall in the former class. Those in the latter class range from the incongruous and artificial settings of a Grainger to the amazingly interesting and yet perfectly right settings of a Bartok. Canteloube picks the most dangerous course, but for all the ingenuity of his arrangements, their simplicity, directness, and fine verve save him from the pitfalls into which so many musicians have fallen. The harmonizations are not as lean and acrid as Bartok's; they are more comparable to Inghelbrecht's settings of French children's songs, but if anything they are a shade superior.

The three bourrées are *L'Aio de rotso* ("Water from the spring"), *Ound' onoren gorda* ("Where shall we stay?"), and *Obal din lon Limouzi* ("Down in Limousin"). Auvergne (a secluded and mountainous region in western France) is the traditional home of the bourrée, a sharply rhythmed lively dance in four-four measure, originally sung by the peasants, later elaborated into an instrumental form often appearing in the suites of Bach's time, and even today occasionally found in a highly developed state—Chabrier's *Bourrée Fantasque*, etc. Miss Grey sings these old bourrée melodies in the authentic manner, vigorously rhythmed, sharply accented, and in a strong, almost metallic voice (glittering rather than brassy in quality). The songs are cleverly connected by brief interludes—little rhapsodies rather than cadenzas—for solo oboe and clarinet. Reed instruments predominate in the accompaniments, and are used with delightfully piquant rustic flavor.

The *Bailero*, a shepherd's song from Upper Auvergne, presents the lyrical side of this province's musical legacy. Exuberance and unbounded vitality of the bourrée are matched here by poetical and nostalgic qualities of moving tenderness and nobility. The happy use of rhapsodic solo wood winds against a quiet background of expressive strings and delicate harp roulades bring one immediately into an atmosphere of truly Delian tranquillity. Can I praise M. Canteloube more than by saying that not even Delius could have set this superb song with keener insight and gentler hands? Miss Grey takes the bold and magnificently suitable step of "singing out" with no trace of sentimentality or affectation—exactly the healthful, broad, and yet restrained style that the song calls for. Miss Grey appeared briefly in the United States last season. May her personal and phonographic returns be soon and frequent!

The delectable mountains in music are not many, but they are ineffably precious. The composer who builds and the collector who discovers new peaks rank as "God's spies." Only the small of soul can fail to recognize and honor them. Significance in music is measured in terms of feeling, not emotion. It is qualitative, not quantitative. And so these gracious, unspoiled songs may fittingly be put on the same shelf with one's treasured Mozart, Delius, and the Elizabethans.

R.D.D.

Octet

DAWES: *Melody*, and SQUIRE: *An Irish Love Song*, played by the J. H. SQUIRE CELESTE OCTET. COLUMBIA 2508-D (D10, 75c).

Ambassador's Dawes' fling at composition bids fair to remain a permanent addition to the salon repertory. The present recording is appropriately songful, and coupled with a typical bit of Squire's salon sentiment, very mildly flavored with quasi-Celtic color.

ORCHESTRAL

THOMAS: *Mignon—Overture*, played by a SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA conducted by EUGENE BIGOT. COLUMBIA 50304-D (D12, \$1.25).

Bigot is a new recording name. He is a Frenchman, which is the limit of my information concerning him. Judging from his performance here is a conductor unashamed to take pains even with an ancient war-horse. He conducts with traditional Gallic delicacy, but one could wish for greater fire and breadth to the more bombastic passages. Nevertheless, a very deft performance particularly admirable for its musically handling of the *piano* and *pianissimo* selections.

MEHUL: *Le Jeune Henri—Overture*, played by the *Lamoureux Orchestra*, Paris, conducted by ALBERT WOLFF. BRUNSWICK 90195 (D12, \$1.50).

Méhul (1763-1817) was a revolutionist of his day, regenerating opera-comique in France and carrying on the work of Gluck. Recorded examples of his works are infrequent; this is the most considerable to date. Although *Le jeune Henri* dates from 1797 it retains surprising freshness and vitality, qualities which are agreeably brought out in Wolff's characteristically alert, dynamic performance, and the excellent recording. An interesting and enlivening disc, well off the beaten track of the recorded repertory.

INSTRUMENTAL

Piano

SCHUMANN: *Vogel als Prophet*, and PALMGREN: *Cradle Song*, played by MYRA HESS. COLUMBIA 2512-D (D10, 75c).

A new Hess disc is just cause for phono-pianistic rejoicing. Compared with some of the earlier Hess releases the present coupling presents perhaps less arresting musical fare, but the playing is as invariably matchless. Schumann's *Prophet Bird* flies infrequently of late, but the piece has lost nothing of its fantastic originality. To be sure, the middle section strikes one as rather conventionally Schumannesque, but the strange fluttering opening and close are musically as unique as the day they were written. Palmgren's *Cradle Song* is a pleasant little piece that avoids most of the clichés of its type. In Miss Hess's hands it gains a warmth and restraint that even the composer could scarcely hope for.

MOZART (arr. KREISLER): *Rondo*, played by RENE BENEDETTI, with piano accompaniments. COLUMBIA 2507-D (D10, 75c).

The only previous good electrical recording of the Rondo with which I am familiar is that by René Chemet (one of the few exceptions from her strange devotion to material of the most frankly salon type). Benedetti's deftness has been proved by his earlier releases and is displayed in felicitous fashion. Kreisler's elaborate cadenza adds nothing for me to the gaiety or charm of the Rondo itself, but Benedetti's straightforwardness mitigates its pretentiousness, and makes the most of Mozart's own light-hearted music. The disc is very well recorded and appeals attractively to almost any type of musical taste.

New European Releases

Orchestral

- Bach: Suite in B minor, Mengelberg-Amsterdam Concertgebouw (English Columbia)
 Elgar: Nursery Suite, Elgar—London Sym. (H.M.V.)
 Mendelssohn: "Italian" Symphony and Midsummer Night's Dream Wedding March, Panizza—La Scala (It. H.M.V.)
 Moussorgsky (Ravel): Pictures at an Exhibition, Melichar—Berlin State Opera Orch. (Polydor-Brunswick)
 Rachmaninoff: 3rd Piano Concerto, Horowitz—London Sym. (H.M.V.)
 Johann Strauss: Voices of Spring, Weingartner—British Sym. (Col.)
 Johann Strauss: Emperor Waltz, Viebig—Berlin Phil. (Ultraphon)
 Sinigaglia: Le Baruffe Chiozzotte-overt., La Scala (It. H.M.V.)
 Sibelius: Romance, Op. 76, No. 2, Göteborg Sym. (H.M.V.)
 Tartini: 'Cello Concerto in D, Rudolph Hindemith—Berlin S. O. (Parlophone)
 Weill: Ticky Opera Music for brass, Klemperer—Berlin S. O. (Polydor-Brunswick)

Piano

- Albeniz: Leyenda, and Scriabin: Etude, Op. 8, No. 2, and Preludes, Op. 11, Nos. 10 and 14, Gourevitch (Pathé)
 Chopin: 4th Ballade, Dupont (Pathé)
 Paganini-Liszt: Campanella, and St. Jaray-Janot-schek: Toccata, Jean-Marie Darré (Polydor-Brunswick)
 Schubert: Impromptu in A flat, and Sgambatti: Vecchio Menuetto, Hambourg (H.M.V.)

Violin

- Elgar: La Capricieuse, and Chopin: C sharp minor waltz, Hubermann (Columbia)
 Mouret: Sarabande, and Scherzo-Tarantelle, Tossy Spiwakowsky (Parlophone)
 Vivaldi-Bach (arr. Pochon): Adagio, and Paradis-Dushkin: Siciliana, Thibaud (It. H.M.V.)

Organ

- Handel: Concerto in F, Op. 4, No. 4, Sittard (Polydor-Brunswick)

Harp

- Salzedo: Whirlwind, and Londonderry Air (arr. Cyril Scott), Sidonie Goossens (Columbia)

Songs

- Brahms: Requiem—Ihr habt nun traurigkeit, Emmy Bettendorf (Parlo.)
 Kreutzer: Tag des Herrn, and Abt: Waldandacht, Schlusnus (Polydor-Brunswick)
 Schubert: Le tilleul, and Chausson: Temps des lilas, Alice Derlange (Fr. H.M.V.)
 Stokin: Now let us depart, and Begeur: Penitent's Hymn, Chaliapin (Fr. H.M.V.)

Operatic

- Gondoliers, abridged opera, D'Oyly Carte Co. (H. M.V.)
 Merry Widow, Count of Luxembourg, and Dollar Princess, abridged operas in Spanish (Sp. H.M.V. albums)
 Beaumarchais (Rossini) — 2 airs, André Baugé (Pathé)
 Don Giovanni—Batti Batti, and Re Pastore—L'amero saro costante, Rethberg (It. H.M.V.)
 Dreigroschenoper (Weill)—excerpts, Weber-Gerron-Schroder (Electrola)
 Faust (Berlioz)—Voici des roses, and Pelléas—Maintenant que le pere, Billot (Fr. Odeon)
 Faust (Gounod)—Garden Scene, Nespoulous-Thill-Bordon (Fr. Col.)
 Faust—Vous qui l'endormie and Veau d'or, Chaliapin (Fr. H.M.V.)
 Meistersinger—Quintet, Euch macht Ihr's leicht, Abendlich glühend in himmlischer Gluth, Ich seh' swar nur, -etc., Schorr-Schumann-Melechior-Parr-Williams (Electrola—3 discs)
 Prince Igor—Air of the Prince, Alexandre Kraieff (Ultra.)
 Prince Igor—Hélas, mon âme est triste and Tendre épouse bienaimée, Roger Bourdin (Fr. Odeon)
 Roi malgré lui—Ceremonial and Romance, Gaudin (Decca)
 Schön ist das Welt—excerpts, Tauber and Alpar (Parlophone)
 Topaze (Pagnol)—Excerpts, Lefaur & Co. (Pathé—4 discs)

Choral

- Bach: St. Matthew Passion, 2 recitatives and chorales (Let Him be crucified and If I should e'er forsake thee, Westminster Abbey Choir (H.M.V.)
 Bach: Cantata No. 4 (4 discs), and Cantata No. 140—excerpts (2 discs), Orfeo Catalan, dir. Millet (Sp. H.M.V.)
 Morley: It was a lover and his lass; Arne: Where the bee sucks; Beale: Come let us join the roundelay, B.B.C. Singers, dir. Stanford Robinson (Columbia)
 Palestrina: Viri Galilaei and Kyrie, St. Nicholas de Fribourg Cathedral Choir, dir. Bovet (Ultraphon)
 Album of Gregorian Chants and Choral music by Victoria, Mitterer, Nicolau, and Spanish composers, sung by the Monks of the Monastery at Montserrat (Sp. H.M.V.—8 discs)

Spanish

- Barrios: Musica Espanola, Cuarteto Iberia (Sp. H. M.V. album)
 Zambas Gitanas, Gypsy Quartet "La Coja" (Sp. H. M.V. album)

Miscellaneous

- Deutsche Jugend, J. J. Findlay (Columbia—6 discs)
 Music Hall Sketch (Le petit violon, essai au piano, etc.) Grock (F. Odeon)
 Balinese Native Music (Odeon)

Current Importations

AS A constant reader of the P. M. R. notes and reviews of imported recordings, I have noticed that a number of highly significant importations have not yet appeared in its columns. Since I have had the opportunity of hearing most of these, and adding many to my collection, I venture to submit the following notes, written rather informally I am afraid and with no pretensions to high, critical discernment, for the benefit of such readers as do not have the opportunity of hearing the records before purchase, and yet who would be interested in getting them once they were assured to some extent that they are thoroughly worthwhile. The most important work of all is one that should be in every collection, even although a previous version of the music may already be owned. This is Willem Mengelberg's English Columbia records (LX-129-130) of the Third *Leonora* Overture of Beethoven. None of the previous recordings approaches this in either mechanical or musical brilliance. It can be compared only to Mengelberg's own versions of the fourth and fifth Tchaikowsky symphonies, and like them can be recommended unreservedly.

Coates

Since Coates is at present conducting at the New York Stadium concerts, it is appropriate that one may hear him on records in a group of new recordings all done in his best phonographic vein. One of these, Tchaikowsky's *Francesca da Rimini*, has already been released by Victor, but the others are as yet available only in imported discs. The brilliant recording in this work sets the standard to which all the others adequately live up. I like best his version of Rimsky-Korsakow's *Spanish Caprice*—to my mind much superior to that conducted by Alfred Hertz (I have not heard the Hamilton Harty set), and the charming *Persian Dances* from Moussorgsky's opera *Khovantchina*. Previous to the Coates discs there has only been a band transcription available on records. Another good Russian record is the familiar Moussorgsky *Gopak*, coupled with the *March of the Nobles* from Rimsky-Korsakow's opera, *Mlada*. However, as I already had the competent Wolff version of the *Gopak*, and as the Rimsky piece struck me as rather pompous, I didn't get this disc. I also refused the *Marche Slav*, although Coates' is by far the best recording of it I have heard—not excepting the Stokowski version that made phonographic history in the early electrical days. My weakness for Liszt—criticized though his music is by critics today—could not let me get away without buying Coates' records of the *Mephisto Waltz* and that old favorite—recently much neglected—the *First Hungarian Rhapsody*. Coates' is the only performance I know that approaches the old acoustic one by Nikisch. (Perhaps some veterans remember it with the same pleasure I do.) I understand that Coates has also recorded Liadow's brisk little tone poem, *Kikimora*, but I have not yet heard this. His *Carnival Overture* (Dvorak), however, I have heard and liked better than Goossens' version, but while

the recording was superior the performance hardly surpassed the memorable one by Harty. Recording excellence led me to take the Coates disc of Borodin's *On the Steppes of Central Asia*, although I already had a quite good one by Gaubert. I hope that Coates may be selected to make the long-awaited recording of Borodin's Second Symphony!

Beethoven

Besides the Mengelberg recording of the Third *Leonora* overture, already mentioned, the new Beethoven discs that particularly appealed to me are the Septet and the fourth symphony. Both have been recorded before, but in the case of the Septet at least the new version completely eclipses the others. English Columbia is the manufacturer and of course the artists are the Leners, augmented for the occasion by Hobday (double bass), Draper the incomparable clarinetist, Hinchcliffe (bassoon), and Aubrey Brain (French Horn). Beethoven's E flat Septet, despite its enormous popularity during the composer's lifetime (comparable only to that of *Adelaide*) sounds pretty simple to present day connoisseurs of chamber music by Hindemith and Strawinski, but it contains much that is charming and should delight less sophisticated listeners. The recording is extremely fine and, of course, the playing is up to the best standards of the distinguished performers. I know of no other chamber work better suited to begin one's study of score reading and instrumentation. The symphony is conducted by Casals (with his own Barcelona orchestra) for H. M. V., and while it may lack some of the exceptional vivacity and gusto of Sir Hamilton Harty's Columbia version, it enjoys the benefit of the more recent developments in recording, and the performance is the beautifully balanced and studied work one would expect of Casals' consummate musicianship. On the last side is a splendid rendering of the seldom played *Ruins of Athens* overture. I also heard the latest Lamond Beethoven recording (H. M. V.)—the "Waldstein" sonata, but while the recording of the piano tone was much better than that in any of the previous releases in this series, I was still unable to work up any great enthusiasm for Lamond's somewhat mannered and academic performance. If only Paderewski were given the opportunity to record the "Waldstein". . . !

Mendelssohn

Two important new album sets have been added to the Mendelssohn repertory, the "Italian" Symphony, conducted by Poulet for French Decca, and a group of nine of the *Songs Without Words*, played by Friedman for English Columbia. The former is very disappointing, and the latter is of rather moderate interest. Decca's recording—lately so good—falls down badly in the symphony, and Poulet's performance is scarcely better than mediocre, especially if one has heard Koussevitzky's marvellously scintillant reading. It is unfortunate that Mendelssohn's

best orchestral works have not been given more attention by the phonograph. To be sure, we have Weingartner's highly competent performance of the "Scotch" symphony (Columbia), but the "Italian" symphony is far more attractive and so far has either been neglected or shabbily treated. My vote is for a Boston Symphony version. Friedman does better than Poulet, but his highly individual style of playing has neither the geniality or suavity best suited to the *Songs Without Words*. Naturally he gives us competent performance, but he is unable to reconcile us to the artificial sweetness of these morceaux as—for instance—de Pachmann does. The choice of selections is representative without concentrating on the too hackneyed numbers: Hunting Song, two Venetian Gondola Song, Joyous Peasant, Lost Happiness, Duetto, Fleecy Cloud, Sadness of Soul, Lost Illusion.

Mengelberg

It was not so very long ago that the P. M. R.'s correspondence columns were filled with anguished complaints about the dearth of Mengelberg recordings. An old Mengelberg enthusiast myself I sympathized heartily with the writers. But we have had no cause for distress lately. Mengelberg has stepped into his rightful rank as one of the phonograph's busiest and most important conductors. He seems equally at home playing with his own Amsterdam orchestra for Columbia and the New York Philharmonic-Symphony for Victor and the H. M. V. chain. Our sadness over his not returning to the latter is partly assuaged by the fine series of recordings made while he was last here and which periodically continue to appear. I hope the list is not yet exhausted. Strangely enough several works have first been released abroad. The only one of these I have heard is the Christian Bach *Sinfonia*, but I understand that there is also a disc of the *Hänsel und Gretel* prelude—which he should do to perfection. My first acquaintance with Christian Bach was made through a light and very gay "fest" overture (I have forgotten the exact title) played by an amateur orchestra to which I belonged. It was not at all Bachian, but it was delightful. The *Sinfonia* in B flat was first recorded by Mengelberg with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw for Columbia, but curiously only in part. Now he has re-done the work in its entirety and with the benefit of more recent recording. It is a pleasure to renew one's liking for the gracious opening Allegro and the gravely expressive Andante, and to hear now the sparkling finale. On the fourth side of the two discs Mengelberg plays Mahler's interesting arrangement of the famous air from Bach's D major suite. The ravishing tone qualities of the Philharmonic-Symphony's strings make one forget he has heard the piece a thousand times and give it a new and moving significance.

Bach

The supreme Bach recording of recent months is for me the Szigeti (English Columbia) performance of the first sonata (G minor, unaccompanied violin). Szigeti, to my mind, has never been given half the phonographic opportunities he deserves. Every time he does do a big work it is an instantaneous success—witness the Brahms violin concerto. Bach's sonatas for violin solo offer tremendous problems to the player, not merely technical difficulties but musical

difficulties. The sensitive, assured, vibrant way that Szigeti stands up to the music makes all these problems seem as if they never existed. The fugue is made as clear and clean as could be imagined, and the gracious Siciliana and dazzling Presto are beyond all praise. The only other important Bach recording I have heard is the concerto for two violins by Alma and Arnold Rosé. I much prefer it to the only other complete electrical recording (by the Witks), but I still long for a complete electrical version of the famous performance by Kreisler and Zimbalist, or of course Szigeti and . . . most any competent fiddler.

Elgar

The Elgar recorded literature grows at an astonishing pace. Originally one of those who considered Elgar a pale British reflection of Brahms, I have come to agree with his English admirers that he is an international musical figure of high individuality and significance. The 'cello concerto with the solo part played by Beatrice Harrison (H. M. V.) first effected my conversion, and more lately it has been reinforced by the lovely violin concerto from English Columbia. (Why is this magnificent work never played in American concert halls?). The *Crown of India* suite (H. M. V.) is of another class—light effective theatre music with little real conviction to it, but with the first symphony (H. M. V.) we return to the real Elgar. While often somewhat cumbersome and over-long, this symphony is undeniably music in the great tradition. I defy even modernists to listen to it unmoved.

Frenchmen

Living French composers having been smiled on by the phonograph during the last few years and the contributions of the French phonograph companies to recorded contemporary music are probably more important than those of any other country. I have heard a great many of these works and while I have not been in active sympathy with all of them, the standards of both playing and recording are commendably high and in many instances the music is extremely fine. Those I liked best are the graceful *Habanera* of Aubert (French H. M. V.) and the gravely noble *Sarabande* of Roger-Ducasse (French H. M. V.). I am also greatly taken with Roussel's *Festin*, already issued in this country.

Among the older French composers I enjoyed the recordings by Monteux of Berlioz's *Fantastic Symphony* (easily the best recorded version) and the less well-known *Benvenuto Cellini* and *Les Troyens* overtures. The complete set of Massenet's *Werther* is extremely fine from both recording and performance standpoints, but I couldn't muster up the enthusiasm for this music that most music lovers seem to feel. Two works by Fauré, however, did move me, the Requiem and the string quartet (I have long been an admirer of his violin sonata issued several years ago in this country by Victor). Two works that I hope to see recorded in the near future are the piano concertos by Aubert and Rhené-Baton, both of which would make splendid phonographic material. I hope to hear more of Roussel, also. Anyone who knows the exhilarating Suite in F and the fantastic *Festin* will want to form an acquaintanceship with the first symphony. B.W.

CHORAL

DOBROWEN: *An Old Polka*; *Two Cossack Songs* (arr. JAROFF)—In 1893, In a Smithy; *Panihida* (arr. TSCHENESNO F), sung in Russian by the DON COSSACKS CHOIR, conducted by SERGE PAROFF. COLUMBIA 50305-D (D12, \$1.25).

The first side takes the familiar course of the Don Cossacks' most characteristic performances: a dashing polka and two martial Cossack songs, sung with great spirit and vivacity, and in the last song breaking into the shrill whistles and war-cries that so successfully inflame a concert audience, but which sound rather over-hysterical on discs. The "B" side, however, is the finest piece of straight singing I have yet heard from the Don Cossacks. *Panihida* is a funeral dirge of poignant lyrical feeling rather than Tchaikowskyized desolation and woe. The recording is of the best and the choir's magnificent tonal qualities are heard unmarred by the forcing of hysteria to which they are so often subjected. A starred choral recording.

Operatic

JOHANN STRAUSS: *Die Fledermaus*—*Csardas*, and VON SUPPE: *Boccaccio*—*Hab' ich nur deine Liebe*, sung in German by ELISABETH RETHBERG, with orchestral accompaniments. VICTOR 7415 (D12, \$2.00).

The *Fledermaus Csardas*, with its dramatic *lassen* and vivacious *friska* is a difficult show piece for even the most brilliant of sopranos. Mme. Rethberg attacks it boldly and with impressive breadth throughout the wide pitch range. The recording is exceedingly powerful and this, together with the fact that Mme. Rethberg occasionally over-forces her voice, is likely to make the disc over-vigorous on all but the larger phonographs. Correctly reproduced, however, it is highly dramatic performance. It is strange that Jeritza's success in *Boccaccio* last season at the Metropolitan has not led to her recording some excerpts. But Mme. Rethberg, with her greater recording congeniality, is a better phonographic choice. She sings the fine aria from Act I, "*Hab' ich nur deine Liebe*," with her usual keen sense of both lyrical and dramatic qualities.

O.C.O.

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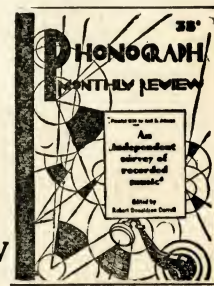
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